

Ned's Atomic Dustbin



by Ammi Borenstein

With lyrics that range from weed whacking through relationships to expending brain cells on the environment, Ned's Atomic Dustbin are steadily assuring themselves a place as one of the best guitar bands to come out of England this decade. According to lead singer Jonn Penney, "The good thing about what people have said about our lyrics is that everyone sort of gets their own ideas from them."

For a band that got its name from an old script of the BBC comedy series *Goon Show*, the Neds certainly live up to the silliness and cynicism that one would expect. The opening song of *God Fodder*, their first LP, is called "Kill Your Television" and started out as four or five lines written down by bassist, Matt Cheslin. The problem was it didn't have a chorus. But the other bassist, Alex Griffin, had a sticker on his bass that said "Kill your television." So, with the addition of Rat Pring's penetrating guitar, the lyrics and music were put together and resulted in a number one British indie single for the band.

In addition to the unique lyrics, Ned's Atomic Dustbin has a distinctive musical sound created largely by the dual basses of Alex and Matt. When the band formed, they just wanted a group of people who

were enthusiastic about playing. So, when both bassists were enthusiastic and wanted to play, no one argued. Jonn calls it their "happy accident." And with the talents of Dan Worton on drums and Rat on guitar, the band has fine-tuned their sound which consists of hard driving guitars strung along by simple melodies and complex lyrics.

When the band initially formed in 1988 they played mostly as a hobby. And for the most part, they played to audiences in England who had never even heard a song of theirs. But when they started getting such positive response they began putting out EPs on the British indie label, Chapter 22. Three EPs later, they were signed to Columbia and put out *God Fodder*. Even though the average age in the band is under 21, they insist that they retain control over themselves in everything from their music to the business aspect of the band. So far, this has proven to be very successful for this group of five from the West Midlands of England. In fact, it's been so successful that the LP has sold 85,000 copies in England and around 30,000 here with orders for more pouring in daily.

On top of the enthusiastic response for their album, their tour dates have been going extremely well. Despite the fact the air conditioning on their bus broke soon after the tour began, the band had a great time with their first 18 dates across North America. They loved playing the gigs, though they had a hard time getting used to the distances between cities here. When they played in Toronto, the Neds hoped to have some time to explore Canada. After the long journey there, however, they ended up with only three hours before their show, and as soon as it was over, they had to jump back in the bus and head south again.

After playing two dates in Japan which sold out in under an hour, the quintet will soon embark on a tour with Jesus Jones across the entire U.S. And although their air conditioning was broken and they didn't get to see Toronto, Ned's Atomic Dustbin are definitely enjoying their newfound success.

Photo by Steve Gullick

Last Crack

by Michael Deeds

"I couldn't believe it," laughs Buddo, remembering the night he auditioned to sing for Last Crack. "They wanted to play 'Ain't Talking 'Bout Love.' I'm like, 'Ah fuck. I remember this from when I was 16 years old.' But it was fun. I couldn't believe I remembered the words."

Kicking back in his Madison homestead, the memories come easily. Outside, the muggy Wisconsin heat beats the streets. In the other room, his girlfriend vacuums.

Thoughts are being sucked out into the open.

"I came from more of a hardcore background," Buddo explains. "I was into Henry Rollins and Black Flag. The rest of the guys were a little bit younger than me, and they were still into that real commercial stuff like Van Halen and Sabbath and Hendrix. And we've grown. But there's still the metal strings there."

And like piano wire, they cut. Formed in 1987, Last Crack is slicing up the metal scene with a brand of amphetamine-charged rock that is destined to confuse. A sort of U2 meets Black Sabbath, this band screams to be heard, but also pleads to be understood. Last Crack's 1988 debut LP, *Sinister Funkhouse #17*, was a pungent taste of things to come. The album cover features Buddo prancing naked in front of a blood-splattered wall. On the back, a gang of obvious heavy metal musicians stare at you—guitarists Pablo Schluter and Don Bakken, drummer Phil Buerstatte and bassist Todd Winger. Cranium-crushing riffs lurk inside.

Last Crack's newest release, *Burning Time*, is a cerebral nirvana for the eccentric rocker. Produced by Dave Jerden (Alice in Chains, Jane's Addiction), Buddo's intro-



Photo by Dan Corrigan

version bursts forth ostentatiously over a roaring wall of axe artillery. "Energy Mind," the first video off the album, already has been absorbed by zillions of young, testosterone-filled bodies via MTV's *Headbangers Ball*.

"It's really weird," Buddo says. "From an underground perspective, I've talked to other people and they're like 'Oh, man. You've got a *Headbanger* video. Woah, that's a drag.'"

But Buddo is truly pleased with *Burning Time*, which ranges from controversial and explosive on tunes like "Dirt Messiah" to surreal and reflective on "Mini Toboggan."

"Every time I listen to it, I hear something else," he says. "And it's my fucking band. That's what's weird. It just keeps growing. And that's great."

"The hand is a perfect analogy," Buddo says thoughtfully. "Four musicians in the true sense of the word. They love their instruments. They want to be on *Guitar Player* magazine. And then me. I'd rather go in with ideas. It's kind of

like the thumb versus the fingers. But it takes the whole thing to do it."

Buddo loves philosophy, religion and poet Richard Brautigan. His band loves that heavy sound. Herein, lies tension. Artistic differences. The things that have split bands from Van Halen to 24-7 Spyz.

In the case of Last Crack, the breakup risk is there, but maybe not so imminent. Perhaps it is dangerously beneficial.

"There's communication there even though we don't always understand each other," Buddo says of his bandmates. "They've never really ripped on my lyrics. But they have said what I've done onstage has been too much. One night, I was wearing this kind of alternative garb. The guys had on these nice, fresh little outfits—striped tank tops and new jeans. I started ripping on them...and Pablo actually picked up a glass and threw it at me."

Buddo laughs out loud. "Almost hit me right on the head. It was pretty violent."